

INFORMATION ITEM

Workshop: Ecosystem Amendment Framework

Summary: *This discussion is a continuation from the Aug. Council meeting and will focus on draft policies and recommendations as presented in the workbook. There will not be any panel presentations. The Aug. staff report is included for reference.*

Today's discussion will take the form of a multi-part workshop with the Council and public, providing multiple opportunities for discussion and feedback regarding the direction of the Ecosystem Amendment. Staff will first present an overview of the ecosystem vision and objectives outlined in the 2009 Delta Reform Act and review the core strategies in Delta Plan Chapter 4, *Protect, Restore, and Enhance the Delta Ecosystem*. A two-part panel presentation will follow, describing how a synthesis of best-available science is informing the initial policy recommendations for the Amendment. Part 1 of the presentation will highlight the data and analyses used to identify priority ecosystem restoration actions and strategies. Part 2 will summarize conservation planning efforts that staff has identified as key to implementing and achieving the vision outlined in the Delta Reform Act. Part 3, a final staff presentation, will provide an overview of the Ecosystem Amendment blueprint, including draft policies and recommendations for the Ecosystem Amendment that will be the subject of ongoing discussions at upcoming Council meetings.

Background

The Delta Reform Act of 2009 requires that the Council adopt and coordinate implementation of a Delta Plan to achieve the State's coequal goals of providing a more reliable water supply for California and protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem. The coequal goals shall be achieved in a manner that protects and enhances the unique cultural, recreational, natural resource, and agricultural values of the Delta as an evolving place (Water Code Section 85000).

The Delta Plan was first adopted in 2013. Since then, significant progress in implementing restoration projects and a shift in State and federal priorities in the Delta have created new opportunities for Delta ecosystem protection, restoration, and enhancement. Also, new research and scientific information provide an improved understanding of key issues such as climate change effects and restoration approaches within the Delta and its watershed. As such, Council staff is preparing an amendment of the Delta Plan Chapter 4, *Protect, Restore, and Enhance the Delta Ecosystem*, incorporating these advances and improving the ability to achieve the ecological goals of the Delta Reform Act.

At the October 2017 Council meeting, staff presented an informational item, "Approach and Timeline for Delta Plan Ecosystem Amendment." During this presentation, staff described the approach and scope of the Ecosystem Amendment, including considerations of best available science, extensive agency and public outreach, and an outline of the schedule and environmental review.

Since October 2017, Council staff conducted extensive outreach with stakeholders, State and Federal agencies, local governments, and the public during listening sessions, briefings and presentations at public meetings, an open house, and through interagency coordination.

Council staff has also developed three science synthesis papers summarizing best available science and describing implications and considerations related to the 2013 Delta Plan narrative, policies, recommendations, performance measures, and how they could be affected by findings from the science review. The following synthesis papers have been posted to the Council's

website: http://deltacouncil.ca.gov/delta-plan-ecosystemamendment#delta_plan_ecosystem_amendment-block-1

- *Climate Change and the Delta: A Synthesis*
- *Delta Ecosystem Stressors: A Synthesis*
- *Towards the Protection, Restoration, and Enhancement of the Delta Ecosystem: A Synthesis* (including Appendix A).

In June 2018, the Delta Independent Science Board (Delta ISB) provided a review of the synthesis papers in a memo titled “Review of the Synthesis Papers to Inform the Delta Plan Ecosystem Chapter Amendment.” The memo is available at: <http://deltacouncil.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2018/06/2018-6-8-FINAL-MEMO-DISBDeltaPlanEcoPapers-Review-20180605.pdf>. This review was briefly discussed at the July 2018 Council meeting.

The outreach and supporting activities undertaken to develop the Ecosystem Amendment were described in detail during a presentation and within a memo provided to the Council during the July 2018 meeting: <http://deltacouncil.ca.gov/docs/meeting-documents/delta-stewardship-council-july-26-2018-item-7d-delta-plan-ecosystem-amendment>.

Future opportunities for public engagement and comment include upcoming Council meetings in September, October, and November 2018, and public meetings and milestones associated with the CEQA process thereafter. Public comments about any aspect of the proposed Delta Plan Ecosystem Amendment are welcome and will be used to inform the development of policies, recommendations, and performance measures. Written comments can be submitted by email to ecosystemamendment@deltacouncil.ca.gov or by mail to Ecosystem Amendment, Delta Stewardship Council, 980 Ninth Street, Suite 1500, Sacramento, CA 95814. Please also refer to the Ecosystem Amendment webpage: <http://deltacouncil.ca.gov/delta-plan-ecosystemamendment>.

Today’s Discussion:

Today’s discussion regarding the Ecosystem Amendment will take the form of a multi-part workshop before the Council, providing multiple opportunities for discussion and public comment. Staff will first present an overview of the ecosystem vision, goals, and strategies outlined in the 2009 Delta Reform Act, and review existing content of Delta Plan Chapter 4, *Protect, Restore, and Enhance the Delta Ecosystem*. A two-part panel presentation will follow, describing how scientific data has informed initial policy recommendations for the Amendment. Part 1 of the presentation will highlight data and analyses used to identify priority actions and strategies. Part 2 will summarize conservation planning efforts key to implementing and achieving the vision outlined in the Delta Reform Act. A final staff presentation will provide an overview of the Ecosystem Amendment blueprint, including draft policies and recommendations for the Ecosystem Amendment.

Staff Presentation: Overview and Vision for Ecosystem Amendment

The current Delta Plan Chapter 4 (pg. 120) describes the successful outcome of achieving the coequal goal of protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem as follows:

“Achieving the coequal goal of ecosystem protection, restoration, and enhancement means successfully establishing a resilient, functioning estuary and surrounding terrestrial landscape capable of supporting viable populations of native resident and migratory species with diverse and biologically appropriate habitats, functional corridors, and ecosystem processes.”

Current Chapter 4 policies and recommendations are organized around five core strategies intended to address multiple stressors and achieve the vision described above:

- Create more natural functional flows
- Restore habitat
- Improve water quality to protect the ecosystem
- Prevent the introduction of and manage nonnative species impacts
- Improve hatcheries and harvest management

In light of feedback obtained during outreach activities, science synthesis paper reviews, and other technical work, Council staff find that the core strategies of Chapter 4 remain relevant and important to achieving the coequal goal of protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem. However, staff has identified several areas where updating, refining, or incorporating new content would enhance or improve the Chapter. Staff presented the following five key objectives of the amendment to the Council in May 2018:

- 1) Integrating climate resiliency concepts and strategies within the Delta Plan,
- 2) Addressing the importance and interdependence of a healthy ecosystem to the Delta as an evolving place,
- 3) Identifying strategies to improve conservation benefits on working landscapes,
- 4) Updating restoration outcomes based on new understanding of conservation needs and opportunities, and
- 5) Reducing governance barriers to implementation of restoration projects

A summary of these objectives is available at: <http://deltacouncil.ca.gov/docs/meeting-documents/delta-stewardship-council-may-24-2018-agenda-item-7c-ecosystem-amendment>.

Panel - Part 1: Linking Science to Ecosystem Restoration Priorities

Part 1 of today's presentation will highlight data and analyses used to identify priority ecosystem restoration actions and strategies for the Ecosystem Amendment. Panelists include the following:

- **Letitia Grenier, Ph.D., Resilient Landscapes Program Director, San Francisco Estuary Institute.** Dr. Grenier is advising the Council on opportunities for landscape-scale restoration in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. She will discuss the importance of considering the history and ecology of the Delta for the restoration of a healthy ecosystem, which is dependent on functioning physical and ecological processes.
- **Gerrit Platenkamp, Ph.D., Northern California Director of Biological Resources and Land Management, Environmental Science Associates (ESA).** Dr. Platenkamp is providing advice to the Council on policy and planning issues related to the Ecosystem Amendment. He will present common and priority attributes of restoration actions within the Delta, given the current status of the Delta ecosystem.
- **Stuart Siegel, Ph.D., Professor of Earth & Climate Sciences, San Francisco State University.** Dr. Siegel is advising the Council on technical issues related to sea-level rise and ecosystem restoration. Dr. Siegel will present on a reconnaissance-level study of restoration potential, which incorporated best available terrain and tide range data, and 2018 Ocean Protection Council/California Natural Resources Agency guidance on future sea-level rise.

Panel - Part 2: Moving from Vision to Planning and Implementation

Part 2 of today's discussion will summarize conservation planning efforts key to implementing and achieving the vision outlined in the Delta Reform Act. Panelists include the following:

- **Kristen Dybala, Ph.D., Senior Research Ecologist, Point Blue Conservation Science.** Dr. Dybala will discuss the use of conservation targets within similar regional conservation planning efforts. Dr. Dybala will present a case study of developing conservation targets for riparian, wetland, and oak grassland ecosystems within the Central Valley of California, including the Delta region.
- **Ron Melcer, Senior Environmental Scientist Supervisor, Delta Stewardship Council.** Mr. Melcer will describe the review and synthesis of conservation and recovery plans undertaken to support the Ecosystem Amendment, and the ecological communities and broad suite of more than 110 species of conservation concern represented by these plans.
- **Brooke Jacobs, Ph.D., Environmental Program Manager, California Department of Fish and Wildlife.** Dr. Jacobs will discuss the planning activities outlined by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) locally vetted Delta Conservation Framework, including regional conservation opportunity regions and ongoing planning initiatives.

Staff Presentation - Part 3: Setting Direction with Policies and Recommendations

Council Staff will present and discuss a workbook (Attachment 7a) which includes the Ecosystem Amendment Blueprint, Preliminary Draft - Ecosystem Restoration Priorities for the Delta, draft policies and recommendations, and associated map figures. The Ecosystem Amendment Blueprint depicts the relationship of supporting documents to the various components of the Chapter 4 narrative, policies, recommendations, and performance measures. The workbook includes proposed revisions to the Chapter 4 policy problem statements, along with proposed updates to policies and recommendations. Updates to related map figures include revisions to technical maps based on new and improved data, planning guidance, and interagency planning frameworks such as the CDFW Delta Conservation Framework.

Contents of the workbook (Attachment 7a) are as follows:

- Preliminary Draft – Ecosystem Restoration Priorities for the Delta
- Matrix of the proposed preliminary Policies and Recommendations
- Drafts of map figures associated with the existing policies ER P2, ER P3, and ER P4.

Council Discussion on Approach to Policies and Recommendations for “Ecosystem Restoration Priorities for the Delta”:

- **Achieving the Delta Reform Act Vision for the Ecosystem:** Council staff is proposing that the Ecosystem Amendment identify and prioritize opportunities for restoration that go above and beyond compensatory mitigation and targets required by projects under the federal and California Endangered Species Act. The proposed changes to the amendment provide a path to achieving the Delta Reform Act's long-term vision (to 2100) of a restored Delta that will require engagement and investment by the public and private sector. Based on the objectives laid out in the Delta Reform Act, is this the right approach?
- **Emphasis on Ecosystem Function:** Council staff is proposing an approach to ecosystem restoration that prioritizes actions that would result in the re-establishment of ecosystem function over actions that address single species management. This is a

policy decision, based on best-available science (e.g., SFEI Delta Renewed), which would indicate that the Council and the Delta Plan are choosing to take a system-wide approach to restoration. Is this the right approach?

- **Sea Level Rise and Subsidence:** Council staff is proposing that the Ecosystem Amendment take a proactive approach to address anticipated impacts of Sea Level Rise/Climate Change on the Delta. An important component of this approach is to address how elevation loss on subsided islands can be stopped and in some cases reversed. How might priorities, policies, and recommendations better address this issue?
- **Leveraging Recovery and Conservation Plans:** Council staff is proposing that the Ecosystem Amendment build on recovery and restoration targets that have been established through other peer review and public processes and finalized recovery and conservation plans. By leveraging the work from completed processes, Council staff will propose long-term targets that establish objectives for restoration and are inclusive of existing efforts (e.g., EcoRestore). Is this the right approach?
- **Identifying Restoration/Conservation Opportunity Regions:** Council staff is proposing that the Ecosystem Amendment uses the COR – conservation opportunity areas – as described in CDFW's Delta Conservation Framework as a common framework for discussing regional opportunities. This allows for more integrated planning and a broad suite of approaches and opportunities to be considered for ecosystem restoration. This is a shift from the approach in the 2013 Delta Plan that only identifies Priority Habitat Areas. By refining the opportunity areas, the Council can provide direction and identify priority actions and attributes over a continuous area in the Delta. Is this the right approach?

Schedule

The following is a schedule of Ecosystem Amendment milestones for future Council meetings:

- **Ongoing:** Staff continues to conduct additional outreach and engagement with local governments, partner agencies, and other interested parties regarding the development of the Ecosystem Amendment.
- **August 2018:** Staff provides an informational briefing at Council meeting, presenting the draft Ecosystem Amendment framework for discussion, including Delta conservation priorities, policies, recommendations, and performance measures.
- **September 2018:** Staff provides an informational briefing at Council meeting, presenting the draft Ecosystem Amendment framework, including institutional priority actions, and provides further discussion on proposed Chapter 4 policies and recommendations.
- **October 2018:** Staff provides an informational briefing at Council meeting, including draft Chapter 4 narrative and Performance Measures. Staff releases Notice of Preparation and initiates CEQA scoping meetings.
- **November 2018:** Council considers endorsing the draft ecosystem amendment as the proposed project description for purposes of CEQA.
- **Summer 2019:** Anticipated certification of CEQA document and final approval of Ecosystem Amendment.

List of Attachments

Attachment 1: Ecosystem Amendment Workbook

Contact

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